7:Crowder J-5 (1955-1958) 1959
MS37 Senegal MS37
Wolof MS30

S 295 882 colour, flopped on the floor like lumps of spittle. Others, like them, were being cured in evil vats or stripped in heavy mangles. I examined one of the skins stretched out on the floor. The Czech pointed to three large holes in its surface.

'They are not good, these skins. Very stiff. They come from the North Senegal and the Fula herdsmen will not learn that the cow must be looked after if you want to make good shoes from it. They are only good for cheap shoes. We have to get the better models from our European factories.'

We emerged from the foetid gloom of the curing section into the dyeing room, full of sheets of leather, which an African was busy spraying scarlet, yellow, grey or blue. Another was trimming the coloured hides before they were sent to dry.

S 295 [463] We followed our guide into a long hall, which reverberated to the rat-ti-tat of a hundred sewing machines, manned exclusively by Africans.

'Are most of your employees Africans?' I asked.

'On this work, yes. But not in the executive. And on some of the more skilled jobs we have to have Europeans.'

'Are they good workers?'

'Very good, though they cannot tackle the more difficult jobs. I believe they are better farther down the Coast. But we have nothing to complain about.'

And from the rate those shoes were coming off the production line, I was sure they hadn't.

'How many shoes do you produce a year?'

'About 300,000. Most of them are sandals,' he said, pointing to some scarlet slippers which an African was packing into boxes. 'These we also produce in great quantities.'

S W [291] He showed me a pink, green and sky blue slipper with a large plastic pompom where the big toe would be. These were wildly popular with the fashion-mad [illegible] of women at the time. Bata's are very much at the mercy of their whims, though they have the consolation that supply rarely exceeds demand.

S [294] [565] As I watched one African youth deftly turning a leather sandal on a stitching machine, I could not help thinking of the old Mandinka leather-worker in Dakar's market, laboriously sewing tough slippers as his father had done before him and as he was bound to do by virtue of his caste. Once he exercised a monopoly

7:Crowder J-5 (1955-1958) 1959
MS37 Senegal MS37
Wolof MS 30

for no-one would undertake his work unless he belonged to that caste. But the laws of supply and demand do not respect hereditary caste-rights. Mass production and cheaper shoes dictate the old leather-worker's redundance. Soon he will fade into the obscurity of a rural industry, a supplier of goods for the local arts and crafts store.

This was nowhere more evident than in Dakar which has a large number of factories. Here one can see the new Africa rising up. The young man who comes from the bush, illiterate and half naked, living much as his ancestors before him. Soon he is caught up in the revolution. At first his house may be a small wooden shed, shared with members of his family or tribe on whom he is sponging. But soon he may earn thirteen pounds a month as an unskilled labourer, so that he can afford to take rooms with one of his richer brothers, whose weekly pay packet as a cook is six pounds. And so in Dakar people of all tribes meet in the great metropolis, live next to each other in the crowded Medina, and help to create a new town-life as different from that of the bush as city life in nineteenth-century industrial England was from that of the countryside.

In Dakar I met Diop, a young Jollof, well-educated, but out of work. I asked him how he lived and he told me that he just went from relation to relation each day borrowing money. He had had a job before, but after a quarrel with his employer, an African lawyer, he had had to leave. Each morning he left his wife, pretending to go to work. He deceived her into thinking he still had his job, by bringing home money lent him by relations. He 'borrowed' the equivalent of ten shillings from me, and to my astonishment promptly asked me to lunch the next day. His house, or rather room, was made of wood. Inside, the walls and the floor were covered with a gaily patterned lino. A large double bed and a small divan provided seats. A chest of drawers hung with all the crockery was the only other piece of furniture. On the walls was a large array of photos of friends and relations, all slightly over-exposed to give the effect of a lighter skin. Diop's wife, a ravishing, beautiful girl of nineteen, had spent all morning preparing Jollof rice for us, consisting of rice done in a sort of tomato purée, to which a delicious white fish with a variety of vegetables and a hot pepper sauce were added. A bottle of wine was produced for me.

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121 Fashion, from a subjective point of view, represents a fleeting custom that depends on the taste and the whims of individuals. Its range of application is universal. It is thus a social and aesthetic phenomenon of the same order as painting, from which it borrows much.

Like all expressions of art, fashion is a language and a magic. It is also a technique, the different aspects of which may be grouped in three categories: the fabrication of the objects (fabrics and garments), the methods of sale, and the motivations for the purchase.

For the social psychologist the problem of the adaptation of the African to European fashions presents itself.

125 Among the various possible methods of investigation, our choice was directed first of all to direct observations and the method of tests. We have taken into consideration both the ethnic origin and the age of the subjects.

I. Female African Population of Dakar

162 1. Resident population on 6-1-55.

We ascertained:

a) the very distinct predominance of the Wolof group (47.8%),

b) the weak representation of the Sérèr and Diola in relation to the Bambara.

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2. Characteristics of this population:

[191] [212] a) Knowledge of French (14 years old and +):
4,844 women and girls speak our language (2,850 of them write it).

162 463 b) Salaried occupations in crafts and business (14 years old and +):
[294] [386] 3,779, of whom: sewing, dressmaking, lingerie, clothing 609
preparation, dyeing..... 142

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The 609 individuals who derive a profit from the fashion trades are divided ethnically as follows:

Cape Verde group	243
Wolof group	157
Diola group	48
Lebou group	31
Sérèr group	29
Others	101

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The majority of the 142 dyers are Toucouleur /Tukolar/ (77) and Wolof (36).

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Out of 1,455 Wolof women practicing a trade, for their own benefit or salaried, 598 are tradeswomen, 157 in sewing, 110 business employees.

The Lébou women likewise prefer to carry on a business (150 out of 340 counted as workers).

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II. Experimental Research on the Aesthetic Sense of Dakar Women in the Matter of Clothing

For this study, which is only in its beginnings, two methods are used:

-- direct observation of clothing worn for display by a certain number of women,

-- the result of tests conducted among some of them.

/Table I appears here on an unnumbered page./

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A. Direct Observation.

1. Circumstances.

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a) The investigation was conducted in the Médina of Dakar, in the quarters Sapeurs-pompiers /Firemen/ and Champ de courses /Race course/ -- between 9 and 19 November 1956, at the end of an election.